



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
P.O. BOX 3378  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96801  
**MEDICAL ALERT**

In reply, please refer to:  
File: CDD/EPI

**February 19, 2002**

**Subject: Increasing Transmission of Sexually Transmitted Diseases in Hawaii:  
Syphilis, Gonorrhea, and Chlamydia**

**Dear Healthcare Provider:**

In 2001 the Hawaii State Department of Health noted a substantial increase for three notifiable sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), compared to prior years. The following are recommendations that may impact on the services you provide to your patients.

**SYPHILIS**

Reported cases of primary and secondary **syphilis** increased from 2 in 2000 to 12 in 2001. Ten of the patients in 2001 were diagnosed with primary syphilis and 2 with secondary syphilis. In addition to the increase in reported infections, we have noticed a change in epidemiology of syphilis infection in Hawaii. In years' prior, cases primarily reported heterosexual contact, exposures occurring outside Hawaii, and were usually diagnosed in public clinics. In 2001, 60% (7/12) of patients with syphilis were men having sex with men (MSM) and 40% (5/12) were heterosexual. Private providers diagnosed 80% of these infections. Among the MSM, 60% (4/7) acquired syphilis in Hawaii. HIV status of 5 of the 7 cases was known, and of these 40% (2/5) were HIV positive. Four of five persons reporting heterosexual exposure acquired syphilis outside the state.

Syphilis should be considered in the differential diagnosis of any patient with a painless lesion or chancre. Please refer to our Medical Alert from March 27, 2001 for more details on syphilis or call (808) 733-9281 for a fax copy.

**GONORRHEA**

After years of decreasing or stable numbers of **gonorrhea** infections in Hawaii, gonorrhea infections increased by 25% in 2001 as compared to 2000 (606 cases in 2001 versus 484 in 2000). The percentage of gonorrhea infections in which the isolate was resistant to ciprofloxacin, a fluoroquinolone antibiotic, has increased to 21% in 2001 from 10.4% in 2000. Because fluoroquinolone-resistant gonorrhea is now widely distributed throughout Hawaii, patients diagnosed with gonorrhea in Hawaii should **not** be treated with fluoroquinolones.<sup>1</sup>

Cefixime and ceftriaxone are the recommended drugs of choice for the treatment of gonorrhea in Hawaii. Since patients infected with gonorrhea are often co-infected with chlamydia, the 1998 Guidelines for Treatment of Sexually Transmitted Diseases states

<sup>1</sup> For further information see: Fluoroquinolone-Resistance in *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, Hawaii, 1999, and Decreased Susceptibility to Azithromycin in *N. gonorrhoeae*, Missouri, 1999. MMWR 2000;49:833-837.

"patients treated for gonococcal infections also be treated routinely with a regimen effective against uncomplicated genital *C. trachomatis* infection."

Several gonococcal isolates with decreased susceptibility to cefixime were also identified in Hawaii in 2001. If a patient has traveled to Asia and/or the Pacific and a clinician suspects gonorrhea infection or suspects gonorrhea treatment failure, we recommend obtaining a specimen for culture and requesting an antibiotic sensitivity tests.

#### **CHLAMYDIA**

The Chlamydia rates have been rising in Hawaii since 1997 when the rate was 151 cases per 100,000 population to 333 cases per 100,000 population in 2001. Although chlamydia can occur at any age, most cases of chlamydia in Hawaii are reported among 15-24 year old females possibly reflecting the extensive chlamydia screening conducted in family planning clinics. Due to the high rates of asymptomatic chlamydia infections in women, the Department of Health recommends the routine screening for chlamydia on all sexually active females 25 years of age and younger at the first visit and annually thereafter, and whenever the patient reports having a new sex partner.

The Department of Health asks for your assistance in the prompt diagnosis, treatment, and reporting of syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia. We also request that for patients infected with these STDs that you routinely ask the names and locating information of the patient's sex partners for medical management. Disease Intervention Specialists (DIS) with the STD/HIV Prevention Program are available to assist with patient and partner counseling and referral. Patients should be counseled about the risks of unprotected sexual relations and all patients diagnosed with an STD should be encouraged to undergo testing for HIV infection. STD infections increase the risk for HIV acquisition and transmission.

Gonorrhea and chlamydia screening is recommended for sexually active females with one or more of the following risk factors:

- \* the patient reports a new sex partner or multiple sex partners
- \* the patient is less than 25 years of age
- \* the patient has mucopurulent cervicitis on examination
- \* the patient has a prior history of a sexually transmitted infection

Free STD and HIV testing is available at the STD/HIV Clinic located at the Diamond Head Health Center on Oahu. Patients on the neighbor islands may call the Epidemiological Specialist of their respective District Health Offices for free STD services. Attached is a table of services that are provided by the Hawaii Department of Health STD/AIDS Prevention Program.

Please contact Roy Ohye or Venie Lee of the STD Prevention Program Office at (808) 733-9281 if you have any questions. We appreciate your continued support in the prevention and control of sexually transmitted infections in Hawaii.

Sincerely,



Paul V. Effler, MD, MPH, Interim Chief  
Communicable Disease Division

# HAWAII DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, STD/AIDS PREVENTION PROGRAM SERVICES

SERVICE	OAHU	HAWAII	KAUAI	MAUI/ MOLOKAI/LANAI
REPORTING/ CONSULTATION/ REFERRAL:				
STD	Hawaii STD Control Program 3627 Kilauea Ave. Rm 304 Honolulu, HI FAX (808) 733-9291	Epidemiology Branch Hawaii District Health PO Box 916 Hilo, HI 96721	Epidemiology Branch Kauai District Health 3040 Umi St Lihue, HI 96766	Epidemiology Branch Maui District Health 54 High St Wailuku, HI
	Disease Intervention Specialist (808) 733-9281	Chester Wakida (808) 933-0912	Jo Manea (808) 241-3563	Kris Mills (808) 984-8213
HIV/AIDS	Department of Health Surveillance Program 3627 Kilauea Ave. Rm 306 Honolulu, HI 96816  HIV/AIDS Surveillance Coordinators: Phone: 808-733-9010			
PATIENT EDUCATIONAL BROCHURES	Health Educators: Carl Bayaca Loia Fiaui (808) 733-9281	Jesse Wells (808) 974-4245	Malama Pono (808) 246-9577	Mary Santa Maria (808) 984-2105
SCREENING FREE/ CONFIDENTIAL	Clinic: Diamond Head Health Center 3627 Kilauea Ave Room 305, Honolulu, HI 96816 (808) 733-9280	For Referral, call Chester Wakida, Epidemiology Branch Hawaii District Health (808) 933-0912	For Referral, call Jo Manea Epidemiology Branch Kauai District Health (808) 241-3563	For Referral, call Kris Mills Epidemiology Branch Maui District Health (808) 984-8213
STD	Clinic Hours M/W/Th/Fri 12:00 - 5:00pm Wed 1:00pm - 6:00pm Closed Holidays			
Examination Treatment for Syphilis, Gonorrhea, Chlamydia				
HIV		East Hawaii: 974-4247 Kona: 322-9705	Malama Pono (808) 246-9577	Lanai (808) 565-6411 Maui: (808) 984-2129 Molokai (808) 553-3145
Counseling/Testing				